



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

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PRESS CONTACT: Tina Berger
(202)289-6400

ASMFC Increases Conservation for Summer Flounder in 2001 *States Agree to 17.9 Million Pound TAL and Commit to Participate in Facilitated Consensus-driven Discussions*

Baltimore, Maryland – The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission yesterday revised its total allowable landings (TAL) limits for the 2001 summer flounder fishery to 17.9 million pounds, down from 20.5. It also committed to participating in facilitated discussions with the National Marine Fisheries Service, recreational and commercial fishing constituents, and the environmental community to reach accord in the short- and long-term management of summer flounder.

The Board's action was based on a number of factors, including the states' desire to achieve equity among state and federal summer flounder permit holders. "The Board still believes that it took the correct action last November, consistent with its legal responsibilities and the real conservation needs of the summer flounder resource, when it set the total allowable landings at 20.5 million pounds," said John H. Dunnigan, the Commission's Executive Director. "But some things have changed. The federal government was getting ready to take action that would have severely hurt the fisheries and put the states and federal agencies hopelessly at odds. This decision will allow us to take a step back with all of the stakeholders involved and develop a longer-term approach to summer flounder management that will allow us to manage the fishery, and to take account of some new developments we expect in the science."

The Board heard from officials of the National Marine Fisheries Service, who indicated that without this action a closure in the federal fishery could be imminent. "The Board recognized that there would be significant impacts on fishermen," said Preston P. Pate Jr., Chair of the Commission's Summer Flounder, Scup and Black Sea Bass Management Board. "We know this is going to be tough on fishermen. But given the way things have developed, it is the best action for the states to take."

"Yesterday's Board action represents a major step toward developing an effective, mutually agreed upon management program for summer flounder," Mr. Pate stated. "This action affirms the commitment of the Atlantic coastal states to work with its partners in the federal government and the fisheries constituencies to manage these fisheries consistent with the needs of the resource and the fishermen."

The states will now need to recalculate their commercial and recreational fishing measures for 2001. The revised measures will be reviewed by the Summer Flounder Technical Committee and approved by the Board or the ASMFC Executive Director by the end of April. In addition, the states and the federal government will be moving forward expeditiously to begin facilitated discussions with the recreational and commercial fishing constituencies and environmental groups to develop a process for long-term management of summer flounder. For more information, please contact Robert Beal, Fisheries Management Plan Coordinator, at (202) 289-6400 ext. 318.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

